



FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

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# Small Starts Projects

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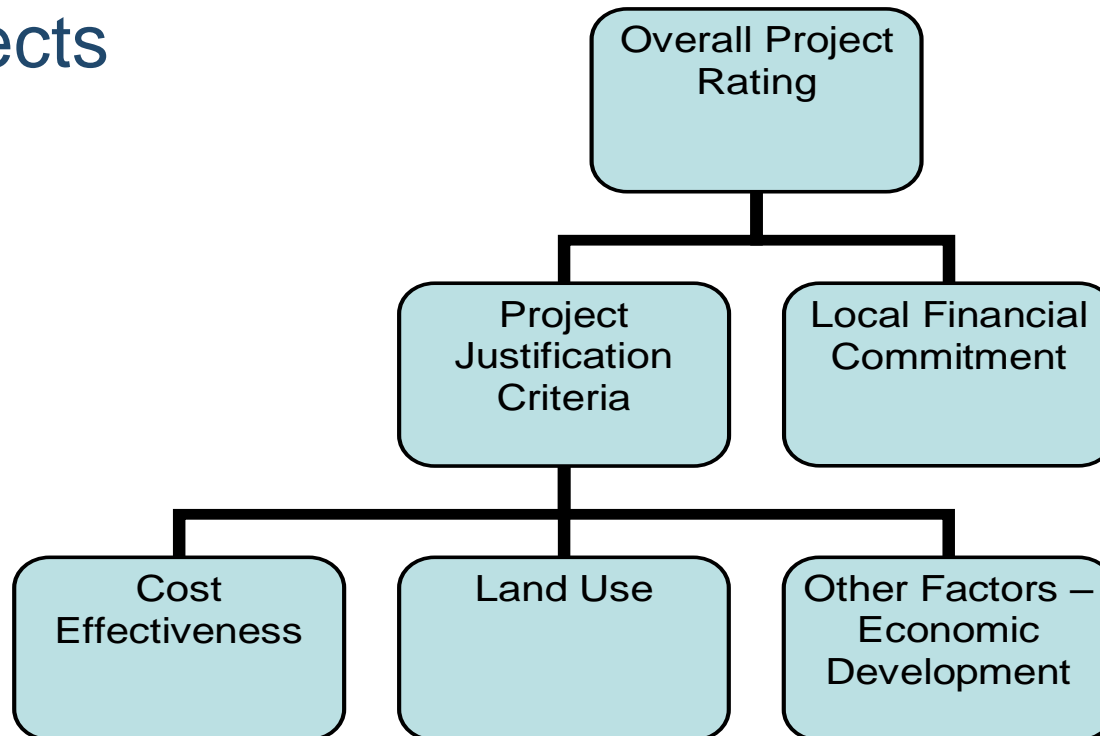


# Small Start Project Qualifications

- Total project cost under \$250M
- \$75M maximum Section 5309 Funding
- Fixed guideway for at least 50% of project length
- AND/OR-
- Corridor-based bus project with the following minimum elements:
  - Substantial Transit Stations
  - Signal Priority/Preemption
  - Low Floor/Level Boarding Vehicles
  - Special Branding of Service
  - Frequent Service
  - Minimum 14-hour Service Day

# Project Rating Process

- This chart depicts the factors used in rating SS projects



# Project Justification Criteria

- Cost Effectiveness
- Land Use
- Other Factors
  - Economic Development Benefits
  - Congestion Pricing

# Local Financial Commitment Criteria

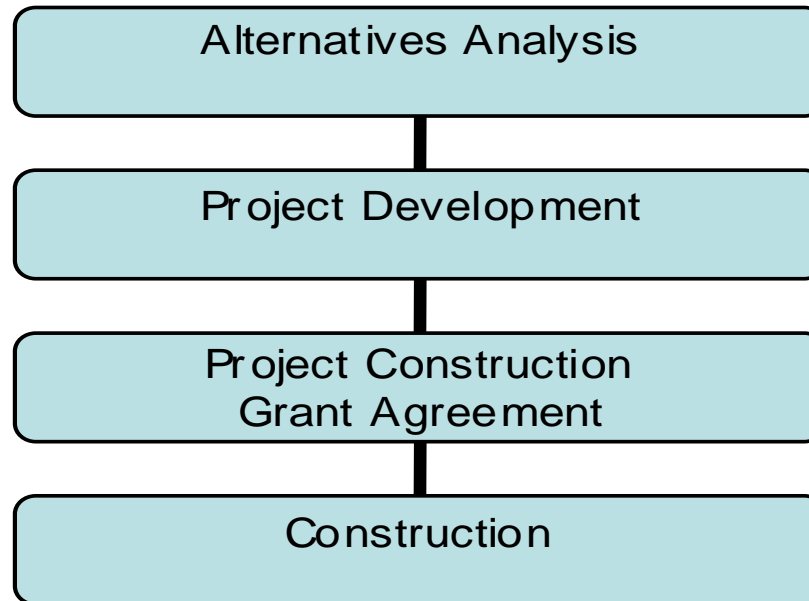
- Funding Plan for Local Share
- Minimal O&M Cost Impact
- Agency Financial Condition

# Small Starts Project Development Process

- FTA evaluates Project Justification & Local Financial Commitment
- Project Development Letter issued for PE and Final Design
- FTA issues funding recommendation (PCGA) after environmental, design, and other requirements addressed

# Small Starts Project Development Process

The chart below indicates the sequence in the typical Small Starts progression



# Alternatives Analysis

- By law, FTA must consider the results of planning and alternatives analysis (AA)
- Small Starts may utilize a very simple AA process, commensurate with the local decision at hand



# Project Development Process

- ❑ PE and FD are combined into one phase referred to as Project Development
- ❑ Project Development Approval Criteria
  - Complete Alternatives Analysis
  - Adopt Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA)
  - LPA included within the MPO's long range plan
  - Complete NEPA scoping
  - Receive a "Medium" rating or better from FTA
  - Develop an acceptable Project Management Plan

# Project Construction Grant Agreement

- ❑ Financial assistance under Section 5309 for construction is provided through a Project Construction Grant Agreement (PCGA), negotiated during project development

# How is a Small Starts Project Recommended for Funding?

## Criteria:

- Approved for Project Development
- Ready for implementation within proposed funding fiscal year
- “Medium” rating

# Small Starts Objectives

- ❑ Streamline the FTA approval processes
  - Smaller project = less risk
  - Fewer FTA decision points
  - Project Development approval letter from FTA authorizes work through Final Design
  - Second FTA decision point is PCGA approval
  - Less formal assessments
- ❑ Achieve a schedule advantage

# Comparison to New Starts

## □ New Starts

- Scope, Cost, & Schedule
  - Formal scope, cost, & schedule reviews from PMOC under OP #32, 33, 34
- Technical Capacity & Capability
  - PMP
  - Sub-Plans
  - Requires full range of skill sets
  - Formal TCC reviews including grantee interviews
  - Formal FTA Report

## □ Small Starts

- Scope, Cost, & Schedule
  - Less formal scope, cost, & schedule readiness assessment under OP #60
- Technical Capacity & Capability
  - PMP
  - Sub-Plans
  - Requires full range of skill sets
  - Less formal TCC assessment

# Comparison to New Starts

(continued)

## ☐ New Starts

- Risk Management
  - Bigger job = more risk
  - Formal Risk Assessment at pre-PE, pre-FD, and pre-FFGA
- FTA Readiness Reviews
  - PE, FD, FFGA, Start-Up

## ☐ Small Starts

- Risk Management
  - Small job = less risk
  - No formal risk assessment
- FTA Readiness Reviews
  - PD, PCGA

## Experience to Date

- Projects do not advance as quickly as assumed in the beginning
- Many Small Starts grantees are first-timers
- Notion of “it’s just Small Starts” is a mistake
- Requires more FTA oversight and guidance, not less

# Example Project #1 – CRT Extension

## “Routine” CRT extension

- \$233 million project
- 24 miles of alignment
- 3 new stations
- Layover facility
- Shared freight corridor
- No new vehicles
- PTC overlay



# Example Project #1 – Issues

- Scheduled Completion at PD: December 2012
- Forecast Completion: June 2013
  - FRA-mandated safety improvements
  - Freight railroad interfaces
  - Community issues
  - Environmental process re-start
  - Accessibility concurrence
  - Potential lawsuit

## Example Project #2 – BRT

- “Routine” BRT project
  - 16 miles of BRT alignment
  - 16 station locations
  - 14 park-and-ride facilities
  - 5-door CNG vehicles

## Example Project #2 – Issues

- Scheduled completion at PD: December 2012
- Forecast completion: January 2014
  - Unrealistic planning for real estate
  - Unrealistic planning for utility relocations
  - Slow to develop logic-driven schedule
  - Supplemental EA required
  - Delivery, testing, and storage of vehicles before revenue service

## Example Project #3 – CRT

### “Routine” CRT Improvement

- Double tracking
- Signal and communication system improvements
- Accessible platform installations
- Grade crossing improvements

## Example Project #3 – Issues

- Scheduled Completion at PD: December 2013
- Forecast Completion Date: December 2013
  - Funding-driven de-scoping
  - Difficulty confirming third party interfaces and labor resource availability
  - Community issues – major station redesign
  - Environmental clearance
  - Sole source procurement issues
  - End date holding but very tight

# Conclusions

- Fewer dollars does not necessarily equate to less risk
- More reviews and milestone decision points are prudent, not less
- New Grantees advance more slowly

## Lessons Learned

- Embrace Peer Reviews
- Conduct an Engineering Workshop just focused on Small Starts newer grantees
- Implement formal Technical Capacity & Capability review processes on Small Starts
- Assure risk management processes are in place
- Develop a more detailed “PCGA Checklist” and make sure it is included in the Master Schedule